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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4199  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMCSSU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4141  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1286  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001568

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN;  
ANKARA FOR AGRICULTURE COUNSELOR

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: EAGR PGOV PREL SCUL TX  
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE  
STALLED

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¶1. (U) Sensitive, but unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

¶2. (U) On November 27, Poloff met with the Rector of the Turkmen Agricultural University, Gurbandurdy Mammetgulyev, and Chary Taganov, Head of the Academics Department, to discuss the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded and organized faculty exchange between the University of Nevada, Reno and the Turkmen Agricultural University. The first stage of the exchange program took place in September, when four faculty members from Turkmenistan traveled to the United States to visit agricultural universities and research facilities. During that two-week trip the Turkmen participants were introduced to U.S. agricultural university curricula, particularly focusing on agricultural economics.

¶3. (SBU) The exchange program has stalled, however, while Post awaits permission for two locally resident US citizens to teach courses in English language and economics at the Turkmen Agricultural University. Permission from the Turkmen Government was initially requested in July, with instruction meant to begin at the start of the school year in September. When asked if there was a problem with the program that would account for the delay, the Rector insisted that he welcomed the program. However, because the Agricultural University is subordinate to the Ministry of Education, the program would need to be approved by that ministry. Mammetgulyev offered the theory that the piece of paper to approve the US teachers had gotten lost in a pile on someone's desk, or that an employee had been replaced and not transferred the necessary piece of paper to his successor.

¶4. (U) The Rector of the Agricultural University continued with descriptions of various programs that the university conducts with foreign universities and organizations, in

order to prove his point that he was more than willing to continue this exchange program with the U.S. He said that his university is participating in three TACIS programs, as well as programs with Spanish, Hungarian, and Italian institutions. In addition, John Deere and Case New Holland have sponsored centers that Agricultural University faculty use to teach about agricultural equipment. GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation enterprise, conducted a program very similar to the U.S. Faculty Exchange Program. 10-12 students from the Agricultural University took 10 months of German classes at the University. They subsequently took a test and the best students were selected to go to Germany for a six-month long Master's course.

¶5. (SBU) Both Mammetgulyev and Taganov indicated that these exchange programs were important to them because they improve the quality of education for Turkmen agricultural specialists. The Rector boasted that he made sure all of his students had hands-on experience, as well as classroom lectures. He said that 71 percent of the agricultural education program was theoretical, and 29 percent practical. He added that the Agricultural University had 25 hectares of land at the campus in Ashgabat, as well as five institutions around Turkmenistan.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Both the Rector and the Head of the Academics Department seemed genuinely open to cooperation with foreign universities, including US institutions. The Head of the Academics Department was himself one of the participants in the first stage of the USDA Faculty Exchange Program. Therefore, it does seem plausible that any problems getting permission for the English language and economics courses are coming from outside the Agricultural University.

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The Rector didn't seem to think his intervention with the Ministry of Education on behalf of the program would be helpful. Instead, he suggested that post continue to raise the issue with appropriate officials in the government, particularly at the Ministry of Education. END COMMENT  
ECKSTROM